

imposed on its commercial strategy, a giant  
fed through  
the chinks of a wall.

As was the general scheme, so were the  
details ;  
inelastic in its external, Europe was hardly  
more  
flexible in its internal, relations. Its  
primary unit  
had been the village; and the village, a  
community  
of agrarian shareholders fortified by  
custom, had  
repressed with a fury of virtuous  
unanimity the  
disorderly appetites which menaced its  
traditional  
routine with the evil whose name is Change.  
Beyond  
the village lay the greater, more privileged,  
village called  
the borough, and the brethren of borough  
and gild  
had turned on the foreign devil from upland  
and valley  
a face of flint. Above both were the slowly  
waking  
nations. Nationalism was an economic force  
before  
nationality was a political fact, and it was a  
sound  
reason for harrying a competitor that he was  
a Floren-  
tine or a man of the Emperor. The privileged  
colony  
with its depot, the Steel-yard of the  
Hanseatic League,  
the Fondaco Tedesco of the south Germans,  
the Factory  
of the English Merchant Adventurers, were  
but tiny  
breaches in a wall of economic exclusiveness.  
Trade, as  
in modern Turkey or China, was carried on  
under  
capitulations.

This narrow framework had been a home.

In the  
fifteenth century it was felt to be a prison.  
Expanding

energies pressed against the walls ;  
restless appetites  
gnawed and fretted, wherever a crack in  
the surface  
offered room for erosion. Long before the  
southward  
march of the Turks cut the last of the  
great routes  
from the East, the Venetian monopoly was  
felt to be  
intolerable. Long before the plunder of  
Mexico and  
the silver of Potosi flooded Europe with  
treasure, the  
mines of Germany and the Tyrol were yielding  
increasing,  
if still slender, streams of bullion, which  
stimulated  
"rather than allayed it^thirst."<sup>8</sup> It was  
not *the* lords  
of great estates, but eager~and prosperous  
peasants,  
who in England first nibbled at commons  
and under-